



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

American School
of Classical Studies
in Rome

THE SO-CALLED BALUSTRADES OF TRAJAN

THE so-called balustrades of Trajan afford an interesting instance of the numerous problems in art, history, and topography which the discovery of a monument sometimes seems to arouse rather than to solve. The historian is primarily interested in the events which these reliefs portray; the student of art is interested in the execution, the technique, while the topographer finds abundant material for discussion in the identification of the backgrounds, which represent various buildings in the Forum. In the almost forty years¹ since these reliefs came to light, the historian and the student of art have largely solved their problems.² The deeds are the deeds of Trajan and the art is the art of his age. It seems also as though the topographer had found peace, and for almost ten years there has been a practical unanimity in the explanation of the backgrounds. Meantime, however, our knowledge of the topography of the Forum has been steadily advancing, until it has become unfortunately necessary to disturb this peace and to resuscitate an abandoned theory, for the simple reason that recent developments are quite irreconcilable with the orthodox view.

For convenience, I give the name Balustrade A to that one of the two reliefs, the incomplete one, which at present faces the temple of Divus Julius and represents the cancellation of arrears of taxes (Fig. 1); similarly, Balustrade B will be that

¹ They were unearthed in September, 1872. The first scientific account of them was given by Brizio in the *Annali dell' Istituto*, 1872, pp. 317 ff.

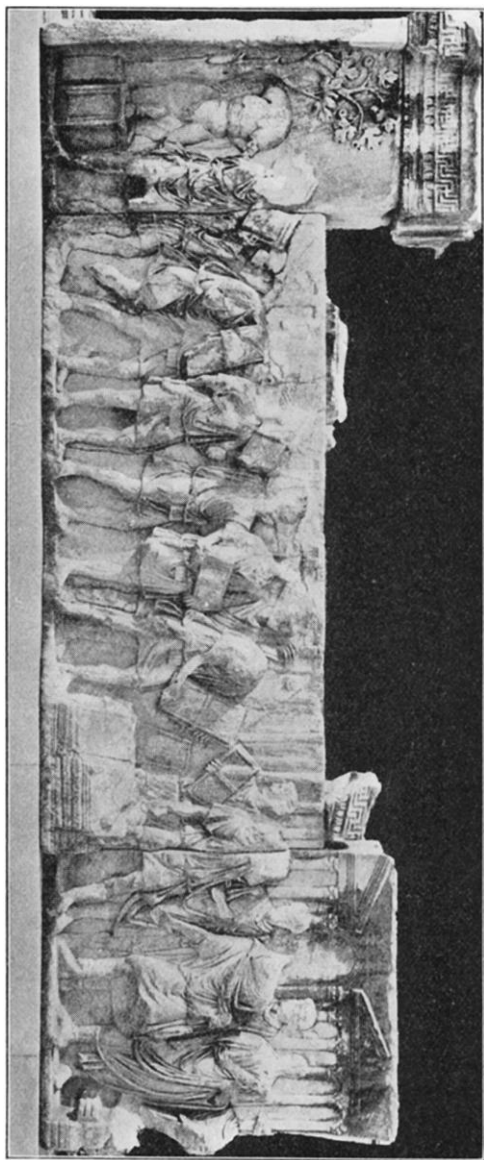
² For a good discussion of the reliefs in relation to Roman art, cf. Mrs. Strong's *Roman Sculpture*, p. 151. A satisfactory account of the historical interest in the scenes is given by Jordan, *Topographie*, 1, 2, pp. 219 ff. For a good general résumé, cf. A. S. Jenkins, *A.J.A.*, 1901, pp. 58-82.

American Journal of Archaeology, Second Series. Journal of the
Archaeological Institute of America, Vol. XIV (1910), No 3.

one which faces the Capitoline and portrays the *Institutio Alimentaria* (Fig. 2).

The orthodox view of the backgrounds is practically that which was proposed by Brizio in the first publication, adopted by Jordan and Richter, and which has since become classic in Huelsen's *Roman Forum*. According to this view, the two balustrades stood one on each end of the Rostra, Balustrade A on the side nearest the Basilica Julia, and Balustrade B on the side nearest the Basilica Aemilia. The *suovetaurilia* were on the outside, and the historical reliefs faced inwards. The backgrounds in these reliefs represented what would have been actually

FIGURE 1.—BALUSTRADE A: CANCELLATION OF APREARS.



visible to one who stood on the Rostra in front of them in case he had been able to look over the top and out beyond them.¹

¹ To have looked over the top of them would have been, in actual practice, very difficult. Excluding the pedestal, the slabs are 1.70 m. in height.

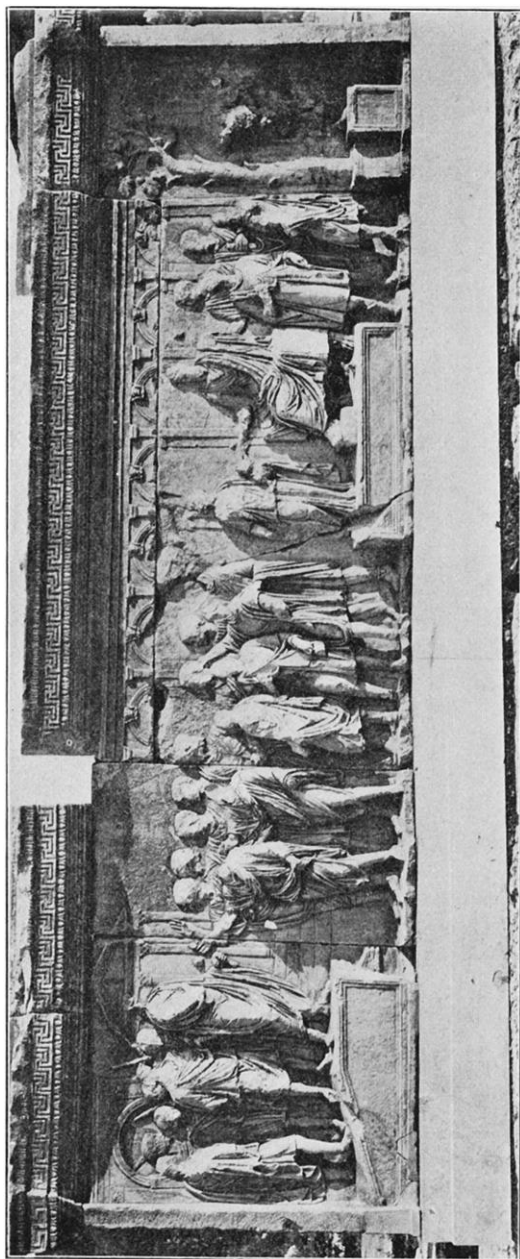


FIGURE 2. — BALUSTRADE B: INSTITUTIO ALIMENTARIA.

Thus on Balustrade A, reading from left to right, the spectator saw Marsyas and the fig tree, then the arcades of the Basilica Julia, then the temple of Saturn, then an arch either unknown or indicating the Tabularium, then the temple of Vespasian, and, finally, on the section which has been lost, the temple of Concord. Similarly, on Balustrade B, again reading from left to right, there comes first an (unidentified) arch, then the Curia, then a blank indicating the Argiletum, then the Basilica Aemilia, and, finally, Marsyas and the fig tree.

Let us now examine certain of these identifications in the

light of recent discoveries. On Balustrade B the second building from the left end shows a façade of five columns and the entablature. According to the current theory, it is identified as the Curia. If the Curia had not been preserved to us, this identification might have passed unchallenged. But, thanks to S. Adriano, the Curia is there, and the original façade is there, including some of the entablature. This façade permits of no columns in front of it, nor is there any room for such columns on the podium which still exists in front of the temple. It may well be that Diocletian restored the Curia, but it is difficult to see how any previous building could have had columns in front of it. In support of the column-theory, a coin of Augustus¹ has been brought forward. On the reverse is represented a building with a portico running around it. On the roof is a figure of Victoria, and across the frieze on the façade are the words IMP. CAESAR. The identification with the Curia rests entirely upon the presence of the Victoria on the summit of the roof. The coin itself, however, bears on its face the absolute proof that whatever building it may be it cannot be the Curia. This proof consists in the inscription IMP. CAESAR across the frieze. It is unthinkable that Augustus, whose policy lay in seeming to respect Republican institutions, should have stamped his name as Imperator on the façade of that particular building which represented the essence of popular government.²

We may well allow certain liberties to the artist who made the reliefs. In general, such representations are often inaccurate. The number of columns in a temple façade is often wrong, the architectural order of the columns is often incorrectly given, but the general effect is a real representation of the object intended. Such an effect could not be produced by the arbitrary addition of a columned façade to a building

¹ Cohen, *Auguste*, No. 122. The coin was minted between 35 and 28 B.C.

² One is tempted to speculate as to what temple this is. Close examination shows that the columns represent not the façade of a temple (which may also be indicated), but rather a portico surrounding it. Is it by chance the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, dedicated B.C. 29? Before the quadriga was placed on the fastigium? The high podium would agree admirably with Pinza's recent identification of the so-called temple of Jupiter Victor on the Palatine as the temple of Apollo.

which had no columns, and was among the sights most familiar to the eyes of Romans.

Accordingly, the second building from the left end cannot by any chance be the Curia. Let us see whether the building which follows after the vacant space (supposed to represent the Argiletum) can be the Basilica Aemilia.

The most noticeable feature of the two reliefs is the presence on both of them of Marsyas and the fig tree. These have been explained generally in one of two ways: either as symbolic, or as having local significance. The symbolic interpretation has always suffered from two things, the difficulty of establishing what Marsyas and the fig tree can possibly stand for except a locality,¹ and the difficulty of introducing one symbolic element into a series of inanimate objects, every one of which has local significance. The second view, that Marsyas and the fig tree indicate a locality, just as much as the buildings do, has had hitherto this advantage for the interpreters, that the exact site of these objects was not known, and therefore they could be placed in various parts of the Forum according as they best fitted the interpretation. No one has claimed the existence in the Roman Forum of more than one Marsyas, and if there be but one, if it is to appear at the end of both the Basilica Julia and the Basilica Aemilia, it must be thought of as in front of the temple of Divus Julius, and the spectator must be at the other end of the Forum, which fits, of course, the theory that the spectator stood on the Rostra. But we know that the Marsyas was near the Lacus Curtius, and in the last ten years the site of the Lacus Curtius has been ascertained. Instead of being near the temple of Divus Julius, it is situated at the other end of the Forum, not far from the Rostra. In other words, if we draw a line across the Forum, parallel to the Rostra and the temple of Divus Julius, and passing through the Marsyas statue, this line will pretty nearly bisect the façade of the Basilica Julia, but it will either avoid the Basilica Aemilia entirely or graze its western rather than its eastern end; that is to

¹ That Marsyas was used in the provincial towns somewhat like Roland in North Germany as the symbol of civic liberty is true, but it is of no value in interpreting the statue in the Roman Forum. It is the presence of this statue in the Forum which gave rise to the association. The Marsyas in Rome thus explains the association, but the association does not explain it.

say, it will be at exactly the opposite end of the Basilica Aemilia from that on which we find it on Balustrade B. Accordingly, the row of arches on this balustrade cannot represent the Basilica Aemilia. But if neither the Curia nor the Basilica Aemilia is represented, it is not possible that the background represents that side of the Forum.

It is at this point that we recall a theory very early suggested, but since forgotten, overwhelmed by the claims of symmetry which the orthodox explanation offers. It is the theory that Balustrade B is the continuation of the Basilica Julia and represents the same side of the Forum. This suggestion was made first by Nichols,¹ and carried out most cleverly by Marrucchi,² and also by Middleton.³ Let us examine it in the light of recent knowledge.

Huelsen has very cleverly called attention to the fact that, on Balustrade A, that building which every one agrees is the Basilica Julia has six arcades, and that there are in the real Basilica Julia exactly six arcades before we come opposite to the point where the Marsyas statue stood. The logical outcome, however, of this brilliant observation is that the artist who designed the backgrounds on the balustrades was keenly aware of the position of the Marsyas statue, and that he intended it to have an absolutely definite local significance. It follows, also, that his reliefs were intended to be seen from a point from which the Marsyas statue and the fig tree were seen with the Basilica Julia in the background. If this is the case, then the repetition of the Marsyas on Balustrade B must be seen from the same position, and as the fig tree and Marsyas follow in the same order, it is not possible to think of them as seen from opposite points, with the Basilica Aemilia as one of the backgrounds, even if it were possible to get the Basilica Aemilia into the background. Balustrade B is accordingly the continuation of the same plane.

Once granted that the arcades on Balustrade B represent a continuation of the Basilica Julia, the rest of the explanation is most simple. The vacant space is indeed a street, but not the

¹ *Roman Forum*, 1877, pp. 66 ff.

² *Description du Forum Romain*, 1885, pp. 159 ff.

³ *Remains of Ancient Rome*, 1892, pp. 345 ff.

Argiletum; instead the Vicus Tuscus. The temple which follows is that of Castor and Pollux (we can see the steps leading down from the high podium), and finally the arch is the arch of Augustus,¹ and the Rostra that of the Divus Julius.

The duplication of Marsyas and the fig tree is not intended as emphasis, but merely as an indication of the point at which the representation of the Basilica Julia is broken, to be resumed again on the following slab. It is similar to the old-fashioned habit of putting at the bottom of the page the same word which came first on the page following. The reason why the break was necessary was in the structure for which these balustrades were designed. An opening, a door, occurred at this point.

But this leads us to the discussion of a matter which is closely connected with the interpretation of the backgrounds, the question of the original purpose and position of these so-called balustrades. Ever since Richter² suggested (in 1884) that they served as ornamental balustrades for the Rostra, this view has grown steadily in popularity until to-day it has almost the strength of a dogma. Yet there exists absolutely no proof that they were ever on the Rostra, and it is merely the charm of the idea, and the deservedly great influence of those who have suggested and adopted it, which have given it strength.

On the contrary, the presence of the Rostra itself on the relief might be adduced as a proof that the spectator must be at a point where he, too, could see the Rostra. Further, we must not forget the other side of these marble slabs, the wonderful *suovetaurilia*. It is very difficult to see what they are doing on the Rostra. Those who assume an idea of general purification forget that the *suovetaurilia* is not an ordinary sacrifice, but is always connected with Mars.³ It is specifically his sacrifice, and whenever it is offered its purpose is to invoke his protection. Whenever it is used in connection with purification, it is an *ἀποτρόπαιον* that Mars may not destroy those things included in its magic circle.

¹ Observe that the arch is standing out of the relief, like the arch on the relief in the arch of Titus. This irregularity is an attempt to represent a right angle.

² *Reconstruction und Geschichte der roemischen Rednerbuehne*, Berlin, 1884, pp. 60 ff.

³ On the connection between Mars and the *suovetaurilia*, cf. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus*, p. 349, esp. Anm. 6.

It is not impossible that these marble slabs formed part of a monument in honor of Trajan, erected by Hadrian, and standing somewhere near where the Tribunal Praetorium had formerly stood. But such a monument, connected with Mars or with the purification after the census, is difficult to find in the centre of the Forum, unless we can suppose that in connection with the Tribunal Praetorium itself the old association of the Praetor with Mars was still sufficiently strong to put the tribunal under the direct protection of Mars; this is of course taking it for granted that the Tribunal Praetorium continued under the Empire. If any of these suggestions be correct, the two slabs would have formed the front of the parapet with the opening between them (compare the arrangement of the Ara Pacis of Augustus), and the animals on each side of the opening would have been represented as walking toward the opening.

Finally, we may hazard the suggestion that the scene on Balustrade B, familiarly known as "The Emperor and Italia," and supposed by some to be a group of statuary, may have actually stood on the spot formerly occupied by the equestrian statue of Domitian. In that case the artist would have shown skill in the arrangement of his two scenes: Balustrade A with the procession of men preparing to burn the tokens of indebtedness at the foot of the state treasury, the temple of Saturn; Balustrade B taking place in that part of the Forum where subsequently the monumental group of "The Emperor and Italia" was erected.

But these are, of course, merely suggestions to be tested in the course of time. It seems tolerably sure, however, that wherever these slabs stood in the Forum, whether on the Rostra or elsewhere, they represented each of them a half of the Basilica Julia with the adjacent buildings.

JESSE BENEDICT CARTER.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES,
ROME, April 30, 1910.